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The Pros

IN A RECENT ISSUE, *Family Weekly* reported on a controversial teen-age problem—steady dating. Many defend it as security for adolescents, as preparation for marriage. Others vigorously attack it as stunting the social growth of high-school students, as dangerous to morals. *Family Weekly* readers were invited to express their views. Here is a cross-section of the pros and cons, from young and old, on this heated issue.

I married the only boy I ever went with, and it was a sad mistake. If I had dated others, there might have been a happier ending. As it was, an unhappy marriage led to a nervous breakdown; we're now divorced and my husband has remarried. It all resulted from dating only one and assuming adult responsibilities too soon.—M.C., Paducah, Ky.

I'm 18. I write a teen column for the local newspaper, *The Register*, and I've covered the teen-age angle on steady dating.

I'd like to mention a little about parents. Some of them judge every date their daughter has as though he were a prospective son-in-law. The way they rake a poor boy over the coals makes the girl feel as though she were getting married.

and Cons of Steady Dating



Here's what
Family Weekly
readers say



Parents who worry about steady dating don't seem to realize that teen-agers are fickle. I know many who have "finally found the real thing"—several times. I don't think it's anything to worry about, and I don't think there can be a definite view on either side of this question. Every teen-ager is a different story.—Kathy Springer, Beckley, W. Va.



Is a father, minister, and juvenile probation officer, I have close contact with teen-agers. From experience

I've concluded that one can't make a hard and fast rule for or against steady dating.

The custom isn't new. Twenty years ago many teen-agers "went steady." My girl and I were among the steadiest. We kept our moral standards high, and I don't think the experience hurt us. We broke up after high school and I later married a girl I met in college. Ours is a wonderful marriage with no ill effects from the fact I had a "steady" in my teens. Even before my day, when grandmother was young, it was common for a girl to marry her first love, and many of these marriages turned out well.—Don Ian Smith, Pastor, Salmon Methodist Church, Salmon, Idaho.

As the mother of two girls, 15 and 17, and a son, 18, I feel qualified to speak up for the younger generation.

Going steady has advantages for parents as well as youth. Parents can know where their children are, what time to expect them home, and, especially, with whom they're spending

their time. You can know your child's friends better than when there's a constant change of faces rushing in and out of your life, some of which, by the law of averages, will be of questionable character.

My three have "gone steady" at least three times each with no ill effects.—Mrs. Glyndon Brummage, Canton, Ohio.

When I was a teen-ager, I went to a high school where two dates with Charlie labeled you as "Charlie's girl." No matter how much I wanted a variety of dates, none of Charlie's friends would even share a booth with me at a soda fountain. If I dated a boy who was out of school, Mother complained that he was too old for me. I announced periodically that I was through with Charlie, but after two or three weeks of staying home I concluded it would have to be Charlie or no one. I never figured out how to break the pattern. Charlie was nice, but I still think it would have been nicer to have dated Tom, Dick, and Harry, too.—Dorothy King, Casper, Wyo.



Is a bachelor, I can't qualify as an authority on teen-age problems, but as a disc jockey

I've had a firsthand glimpse of teen-agers at record hops and dances. What I've observed at these functions makes *Family Weekly's* article a tower of truth.

Steady-dating youngsters seem like robots in action. The art of conversation is almost entirely missing. Their dancing (always bop-style, regardless of the tempo) is completely automatic,

their faces expressionless. The blush of excitement and the fresh vitality that should radiate from a 15-year-old is never there. Steady dating isn't security, it's stagnation.—Jay Clark, New Haven, Conn.

Dating and swimming have a lot in common. The first time you plunge in it's a new and exciting experience. You can continue to swim in shallow water, or you can develop your skills and go into deeper water with more grace and style. Dating only one person doesn't allow for development. It's like always swimming with water wings holding you up. But what happens when you get into deep water and the wings are punctured? Unless you've learned to swim, you might go under.—Catherine Martin, Calamus, Iowa.

I've been going steady for 16 months and I wish I'd never started.

In my freshman year in high school I was one of the most popular girls in the class. I knew every boy and every boy knew me. As a sophomore, I had fun, too. Then I started going steady. Oh, everyone envied me because I had a class ring, and I was very proud to be called someone's personal property. I grew more and more fond of Joe (that's not his name) and I grew less and less familiar with the other boys.

I'm 17 now and still going steady, but I don't know whether I'm in love with Joe or whether I've just gotten used to him. Everyone, including Joe, expects us to marry as soon as I'm through high school. I don't want to hurt him, but I'm not sure I want to marry him either. I go through mental torture every time I see him, wondering what to do. Even if I did

get up enough nerve to tell him, it would take six months for anyone else to know I'm not Joe's girl anymore.—J.B., Springfield, Ill.



I've been going steady for eight months, and it's wonderful. Companionship is essential when you're growing up. It's a form of security. You can't find our kind of companionship by "playing the field." When you don't have a steady, you don't have any reason for trying to better yourself, either in school or at work. When you have a steady, and plan to get married, you want to make something of yourself.—G.M., Verdun, Quebec, Canada.



I think I would be a happier person today if I had been permitted to go steady. Always a timid girl, I couldn't push myself at parties or such. Bob was nice to me, and we started seeing a lot of each other. I was comfortable with him. I always felt sure of myself.

Then came the blow that changed my life. My parents said I was too young, that I would have to stop seeing only one boy so often. At first Bob was hurt, then he started asking other girls for dates, and, in time, he dropped me entirely. I was never completely happy with anyone else.

This experience, many years ago, changed me from a serene, calm individual into an insecure one.—Lonnice McCall, Wichita Falls, Tex.